From: Warner Bros. Studios
Burbank, Calif...HO 9-1251

PRODUCTION NOTES

ON

"THE SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS"

One of modern history's most heroic achievements has become a motion picture of proportions as heroic and adventuresome as the event itself.

After 30 years, Charles A. Lindbergh's epochal Atlantic flight from New York to Paris is dramatically re-created in a Cinema-Scope film based on Lindbergh's Pulitzer Prize book, "The Spirit of St. Louis."

Fourteen years in the writing, "The Spirit of St. Louis" is not only a suspense story of hair-raising and authentic detail, but it also reflects the kind of personal courage and determination which made Lindbergh an international hero and inspired the world to an enduring appreciation of the man and the deed -- a deed which is held largely responsible for the transoceanic flight accomplishments of today.

The project of filming Lindbergh's story had been considered desirable and inevitable by all of Hollywood's entertainment-concious film makers ever since the gallant little monoplane put down on Paris' Le Bourget field after its 33½-hour flight on May 20-21 in 1927. But it remained for a producer like Leland Hayward and a director like Billy Wilder to realize the project -- and for a studio like Warner Bros. to provide its production and presentation facilities.

James Stewart, the nation's No. 1 box-office star and an actor singularly destined and completely qualified for the year's most important male role, was everybody's choice to portray Charles Lindbergh.

Through personal associations with General Lindbergh, co-producers Hayward and Wilder made arrangements for transferring his widely read book to the screen. During the preparation of the screenplay they were in constant communication with Lindbergh -- they talked to him literally hundreds of times on the telephone -- assuring themselves, and him, of an accurate re-telling of the great and memorable adventure.

During production Lindbergh was a pleased and interested visitor on the set, both in Hollywood and New York, and the film troupe was deeply moved to silent and respectful nostalgia when the General climbed into the cockpit of the film's Spirit of St. Louis one day,

and settling himself back into the strange wicker seat, reached out and tenderly made a small adjustment on one of the instrument panel dials.

THE MAGIC CARPET....

In a hemispherical sweep rarely equalled even in these days of global picture-making, "The Spirit of St. Louis" company sped actors, cameras and equipment all over North America and Europe. A conservatively estimated 25,000 miles was covered in a staggering effort to capture breath-taking backgrounds. From a physical -- and possibly a directorial viewpoint -- Billy Wilder says "The Spirit of St. Louis" is probably the toughest picture ever undertaken.

Starting in New York, the crew shot scenes over New England, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, then on to Paris, Deauville, and Killarney. On the way back to America, the company bent northward for shots off Greenland. Back in the United States, not content with the limitations of the sound stage or Warner Bros.' backlot, cameras, planes and personnel were dispatched to Santa Maria, Santa Ana and the Mojave Desert, all in California; up the northern coast of California and Oregon -- and east again to the famous Texas Tower radar installation 110 miles off Cape Cod.

The Santa Maria location, incidentally, which lasted for six weeks, was the largest in Warners' post-war history. There were nearly 350 people, hundreds of cars and trucks and dozens of airplanes operating in and around the California town, 175 miles from Hollywood.

And for the landing sequences in Paris, nearly 7000 French extras were enlisted to re-play the hysterical welcome which the world's most famous aviator received after his history-making flight. Many of the Parisians, warmly sentimental in their devotion to Lindbergh, proudly claimed to have been in the excited throng when it really took place 30 years earlier.

THE TALENTED ONES....

Billy Wilder himself, with Wendell Mayes and Charles Lederer, wrote the screenplay. This super-talented Hollywood artist has an unbelievable record of hits; among them "Ninotchka" and "Hold Back the Dawn" (as a writer), "The Lost Weekend" and "Sunset Boulevard" (as director and co-writer), and "Stalag 17" and "Sabrina" (as director, producer and co-writer).

As for Leland Hayward, it is apparently impossible for him to be associated with anything less than success. As agent, aviator,

business executive and stage and film producer, he has had the golden touch. Inasmuch as aviation has been his hobby since the '20s and was his governmental job during the war, it is only fitting that he should be in the producer's seat behind "The Spirit of St. Louis."

This picture followed the record-smashing "Mister Roberts" as a Hayward production for Warners, and it preceded his filming of Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea." Hayward's stage credits include "A Bell for Adano," "State of the Union," "Mister Roberts," "South Pacific," "Wish You Were Here," "Anne of a Thousand Days," "Point of No Return" and "Call Me Madam."

Ever since James Stewart was a knickerbockered kid in Indiana, Pa., on the occasion of Lindbergh's flight, he has nourished a passionate respect for the flier and his achievements. But when he was arranging a window display of the flight in his father's hardware store, he hardly thought he would ever portray the man on the screen. Sometime later, however, when he became an actor, Stewart admits that he cherished the hope that someday he might be called upon to do just that, and so it was his finest moment as an actor when he was chosen for "The Spirit of St. Louis."

Stewart's fitness for the Lindbergh role doesn't end with his acting gifts. He has distinguished himself both as an Army Air Force and a civilian flier. Besides being a leading airman, he is also a stalwart citizen whose personal life and success render him eminently suited to enact the adventures of one of America's most honored heroes. As an aviator in World War II, Stewart won the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, three Oak Leaf Clusters; and his own plane, a Mustang flown by Joe De Bona, established transcontinental speed records before he sold it a few years ago.

In addition to his other qualifications, the star bears a striking physical resemblance to Lindbergh. It was necessary only to lighten his hair and switch his part from starboard to port to make the picture of the lean flier come true.

Stewart looked at 50,000 feet of newsreel film of Charles Lindbergh before starting the role, and although he denies that his portrayal is in any respect an imitation, he tried to capture the overall "feeling of the man and the flier."

Stewart's recent motion pictures have been "Strategic Air Command," "Rear Window," "The Man From Laramie" and "The Man Who Knew Too Much." His fine performances and his tremendous audience appeal prompted America's film exhibitors to name him the top boxoffice star of 1955.

<u>'THE SPIRIT' FLIES AGAIN....</u>

Of almost equal importance to the animate personnel in the dramatization of "The Spirit of St. Louis" is the little Ryan monoplane

which under Lindbergh's skillful guidance did what no plane had ever done before.

With the original "Spirit" hanging impressively and forever in Washington's Smithsonian Institution, it was necessary to reconstruct one for the acting job -- as a matter of fact, it was necessary to reconstruct three.

The three flying replicas were built because frequently two of them were before the cameras at the same time at different locales, and also there was always the frightening possibility of a crackup -- a possibility, incidentally, that never occurred.

Two of the "Spirits" were built by Paul Mantz, pioneer film pilot who used the original Ryan blueprints for the job, and the third one was put together by James Stewart and flying associates. The planes are complete and authentic in every detail from motor to the wicker cockpit seat with the faded red velvet on the arms, and from the ingenious periscope arrangement to the distinctive swirls on the cowling.

Mantz was in charge of the planes, providing the many antique models used in other sequences, as well as a Stinson L-1 photo plane and a B-25 camera ship which crossed the Atlantic a couple of times with equipment and also accompanied the various "Spirits" on their filmed cloud capers.

In a logistical maneuver calculated to discourage braver men, Hayward and Wilder followed, with CinemaScope and WarnerColor cameras, the route of Lindbergh's flight. The complexities of transporting and housing planes, equipment and personnel over half the globe proved a continuous engagement with customs officials, foreign airfields, weather men, various Air Forces and police department administrators.

Since hardly an airfield exists today as it was 30 years ago, it was compulsory to re-create the fields where Lindy landed. Foremost of these was Paris' Le Bourget Airdrome which was reproduced from photographs at Guyancourt outside Paris. The re-building of Le Bourget was done under the supervision of art director Art Loel and French assistants, and it was here that the 7000 French extras were assembled for a week's shooting. They were transported in more than 100 buses and were fed and paid daily by a corps of film employes.

The technical aspects of filming "The Spirit of St. Louis" were in the charge of Robert Burks, cinematographer who won a 1955 Academy Award for his photography in "To Catch a Thief"; and Tom Tutwiler, aerial cameraman. Charles Eames, noted industrial designer and architect, was production consultant.

There were two major technical advisers. One of them was Major General Victor Bertrandias, recently retired as Deputy Inspector General, U.S. Air Force. Bertrandias, who flew in World War I with Eddie Rickenbacker, was Commanding General of the Far East Service Command during the Pacific fighting in World War II, and later Commanding General of the 8th Air Force Service Command at Okinawa.

The other technical adviser was Bud Gurney, long-time friend and barnstorming pal of Lindbergh. Gurney, who is presently Captain Gurney with United Airlines, flying the Hawaii route, is also portrayed in the picture.

For technical advice on the script, Hayward appointed Wolfgang Langewiesche, aviation writer and political science authority. He was an instructor at the Hawthorne School of Aeronautics in Orangeburg, S.C., and in political science at Sarah Lawrence College. He is the author of "Student's Odyssey," "Light Plane Flying," "I'll Take the High Road" and "Stick and Rudder."

THE PERFORMERS.....

Backing James Stewart in the performing department are a group of especially selected people, many of them new to the screen.

There is Bartlett Robinson, a Broadway graduate, recently of "Point of No Return" and "The Prescott Proposals," who makes his motion picture bow as B.F. Mahoney, the aircraft company boss who helped Lindbergh get the plane and set him on his historic flight.

Murray Hamilton, also from Broadway, most notably "Mister Roberts," well remembered from his screen performances in "Toward the Unknown" and "The Girl He Left Behind," appears in the role of Bud Gurney, Lindbergh's barnstorming sidekick.

An eminent gentleman of letters and sometimes of the stage is Marc Connelly, who portrays Father Hussman in "The Spirit of St. Louis." Author of "The Green Pastures" and other plays, Connelly appeared on the London stage several years ago in "Our Town."

"The Girl With the Mirror," who has always lingered in Lindbergh's memory and whose name he has never known, is played by Patricia Smith, a green-eyed young lady from the stage. She was the ingenue with Henry Fonda in "Point of No Return."

The men of the Spirit of St. Louis organization who sponsored the Lindbergh flight are: Robert Cornthwaite as Harry Knight; David Orrick as Harold Bixby: Robert Burton as Albert Lambert; Maurice Manson as Lansing Ray; James O'Rear as Earl Thompson; and James L. Robertson, Fort Worth aviation company president who enacts the role of his own father, Maj. William Robertson.

Arthur Space plays the part of Donald Hall of Ryan. Others are Harlan Warde, Dabs Greer, Paul Birch, David MacMahon, Herb Lytton. Charles Watts is the suspenders salesman, James Bates is the corn-fed youth on the mule, and the quick shot of Lindbergh as a tow-headed youngster with a fishing pole is done by Peter Scaroni, a 12-year-old sixth grade student of Santa Maria, Calif.

And then there's Jasper. He's a fly, the one that enters the cockpit of the Spirit of St. Louis and from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland is in cozy rapport with Jas. Stewart. Jasper is one of an estimated 4200 flies, mostly of the horse variety, which were either tried, discarded or used in filming what the director avowed was the most exasperating production headache in a motion picture loaded with major problems.

Jasper acquired his name in an alphabetic arrangement which property master Limey Plews used to identify various flies as they worked. The first one was Alfred, then came Burt, Clarence, David, Edgar, Frank, Gus, Harvey and Ian.

Jasper was rendered tractable and directable by Limey who discovered a fly-taming method that involved first dunking the fly in ice water, then covering him with cigaret ashes. The dunking knocked him out, the ashes revived him to a perfect point of controllable activity. At least that's what Limey says.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE....

James Stewart spent two and a half times as many hours in the cockpit of the Spirit of St. Louis as Lindbergh did in actually making the flight. The star estimated he was in the plane a total of 80 hours. Lindbergh, as noted by history, did it in 33½ hours.

Not only that, but the screen's Spirits of St. Louis logged considerably more flying time than the original plane. The movie planes flew something close to 700 hours, while Lindbergh flew the original Spirit a total of 489 hours and 28 minutes in 174 flights before it was enshrined at the Smithsonian.

The aerial circus was staged by Bud Gurney and Wilder at the Irvine Ranch near Santa Ana. The two Standard J-1 planes of the 1920 period were built for the colorful sequence, and stunt fliers were called to duty for the trick flying.

For the first time in eight years an airplane flew at prohibitive heights over the city of Paris. The Spirit of St. Louis flew as low as 350 feet, shockingly lower than the 6000 feet prescribed by French civil and aeronautical regulations as the minimum height for over-Paris air activity. Permission for the flying was given by the Prefect of Police, M. DuBois. The Spirit flew over the Eiffel Tower, the Place de la Concorde, Notre Dame, the Arch of Triumph and the Seine while as many as a dozen cameras ground away from various spots.

Also the lights of Paris were switched on an hour earlier for several nights in order to obtain the proper "mood" photographic effects.

In Deauville, the Spirit of St. Louis was landed within shouting distance of the world's plushest gambling casino. In Killarney, Ireland, the silver monoplane nestled among the cows and sheep on an improvised landing field.

Present generation awareness of Charles Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight was proved in an outstanding-events quiz conducted by Prof. Herbert Fingarette at the University of California. In reply to the question "What is an aviator named Lindbergh famous for?", out of 30 students, 27 gave correct answers. One said he was first to fly non-stop around the world and two said the first to fly over the North Pole. To the question "What is the Spirit of St. Louis?", 28 said Lindbergh's plane. One said a Santa Fe train, and one said it was a motion picture starring James Stewart.

SOME VITAL STATISTICS.....

"The Spirit of St. Louis" is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book of the same title by Charles A. Lindbergh.

It is a Leland Hayward-Billy Wilder production, directed by Wilder, for Warner Bros. presentation.

It stars James Stewart in the role of Lindbergh.

It is in CinemaScope and WarnerColor.

The replicas of the Spirit of St. Louis were re-constructed from the original Ryan aircraft blueprints, and are accurate in every detail.

Lindbergh's official flight time from New York to Paris on May 20-21, 1927, was 33 hours, 30 minutes and 29.8 seconds. He took off on an overcast morning from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, N.Y., at 7:52. He landed at LeBourget, Paris, at 10:22 p.m., French time, May 21st.

The total flight time of the Spirit of St. Louis was 489 hours and 28 minutes in 174 flights.

Its span is 46 feet, its overall length 27 feet 8 inches, its overall height 9 feet 10 inches.

Gross weight, fully loaded 5250 pounds.
Fuel capacity, 450 gallons.
Oil capacity, 20 gallons.

Maximum air speed with gross weight at start of flight 120 miles per hours; lightly loaded at end of flight 124.5 mph.

Minimum air speed at start 71 mph; at end of flight 49 mph.

Among other things printed about him, General Lindbergh denies that he had a kitten as mascot aboard the Spirit of St. Louis; that on his arrival at Paris did he announce his name or request a cigarette or a glass of milk or say, "Well, I made it," or inquire as to whether he had landed at Paris. As a matter of fact, according to his book, his first words were, "Are there any mechanics here?" followed by "Does anyone here speak English?"

In the months after the flight, Lindbergh received hundreds of thousands of letters and telegrams and more than 15,000 articles from 69 countries, most of which are now in the Lindbergh collection of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

He declined many offers, including a home in Flushing, a $50,000 offer for a cigarette endorsement, and several motion picture contracts -- one of which carried a figure of $5,000,000.

The Raymond Orteig prize of $25,000 for the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris was awarded to Lindbergh on June 16, 1927, at the Hotel Brevoort, New York City.

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